

To: Members of the Judiciary Committee
From: Kate Martin, West Hartford, CT
Re: In support of H.B. 6355
Date: March 3, 2021

Dear Chairs and Distinguished Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Kate Martin and I am a resident of West Hartford. I am writing in support of H.B. 6355, An Act Concerning a Risk Protection Order or Warrant. I support this bill because modernizing CT's current risk warrant law is a common-sense measure that can save lives.

In 1999, following the CT Lottery Shooting, Connecticut became the first state in the nation to pass an extreme risk law. This law allows law enforcement to remove firearms from individuals deemed to be an imminent risk to themselves or others. Since 1999, 18 other states and D.C. have implemented versions of the law, finding ways to make this lifesaving legislation more effective and accessible. The time has come for Connecticut to revisit the law, to ensure we have one of the strongest extreme risk laws in the nation.

The most notable change to the current law is to expand the class of individuals eligible to petition the court for an order. Under current law, two police officers, or a state's attorney can seek a protective order. Under this new proposal, family and household members, specified medical professionals, and only one police officer would be able to petition the court for a protective order. Family members are often the first to recognize when their loved one is in crisis. That is why it's crucial that they have a way to directly petition the court to temporarily remove guns from loved ones who could be a risk to themselves or others. One study showed that Connecticut's law was associated with a 14 percent reduction in firearm suicide in the state yet, on average, someone dies from suicide every three days in our state—we must do better.¹

The bill would also prevent a person subject to an order from obtaining new firearms. Under current law, an individual who is found by the court to pose a danger to themselves or others is required to forfeit their firearms, but is not prevented from purchasing a new weapon.

The bill would also change the length of which an order is in effect. Under current law, an order is in place for one year, without an opportunity to petition the court to get firearms back before the order expires. Once the year expires, the firearms are returned to the owner, without consideration of whether the individual is still a threat to themselves or others. This is irresponsible. The new bill includes due process protections by allowing an individual to petition the court to regain their access to firearms every 180 days.

Please support HB 5448 and these improvements to CT's risk warrant law. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Best,

Kate Martin
West Hartford, CT

¹ Aaron J. Kivisto and Peter Lee Phalen, "Effects of Risk-Based Firearm Seizure Laws in Connecticut and Indiana on Suicide Rates, 1981–2015," *Psychiatric Services*, 69, no. 8 (2018): 855-862.